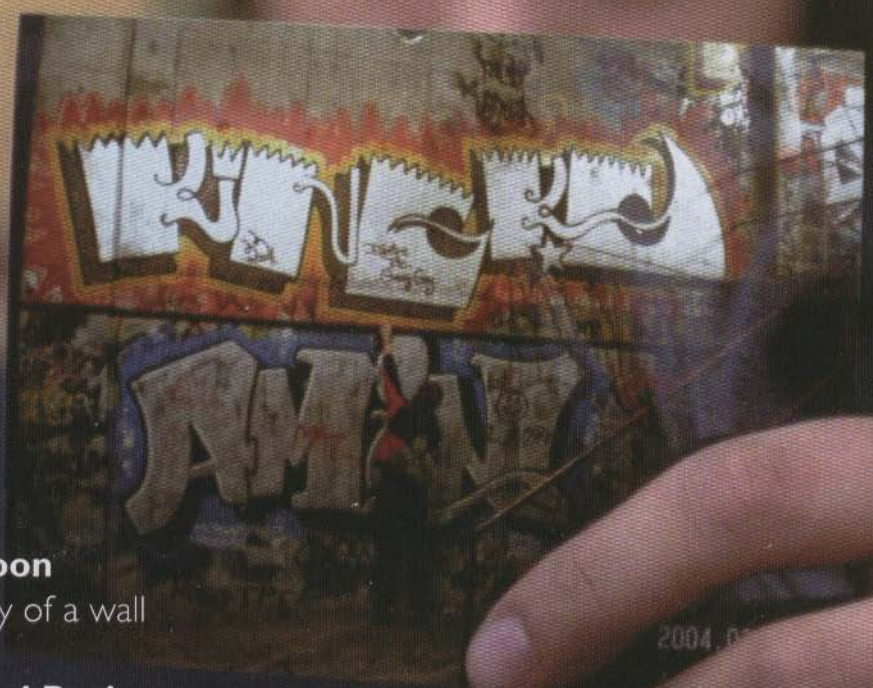
VISIT…

# UNDERGROUND PRODUCTIONS

NR29 up 2004

**King Kong**
Not a raging monster

**Yers**
The life and times of
a red line bomber



**See Ya Soon**
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projection 43
**weactivist Chris Pastras**
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# Why aren't there more photos in UP?

Is this the first time you've picked up a copy of UP, or have you been reading us since 1992? Do you live in our home town of Stockholm, New York, the birthplace of graffiti, or somewhere else in the world where UP is available? Is graffiti your life? Do you wonder what graffiti is all about, or do you fly into an unholy rage as soon as someone writes something without permission?

Regardless of who you are, you're probably wondering why this issue of UP includes a story on Yers, who jumps fences and writes tags on subway cars, an article about twenty years of pieces on a specific wall by Eriksdalsbadet in Stockholm, a report from Budapest and any number of pictures of graffiti pieces and tags.

You may wonder why we haven't included all the pictures of the 20th anniversary of Swedish graffiti in Norrköping. Why there aren't more pages of subway pieces. You may wonder why the picture you sent us didn't make it. Why there aren't more articles, or why we even bother to write any when there are so many pieces to publish.

Graffiti writers and graffiti fans are not a homogenous group. UP's readership spans school children to old-age pensioners. Everyone has a opinion on what constitutes good graffiti and what they would like to see in the magazine.

We mainly try to show what we think is good and interesting graffiti, and to depict what motivates graffiti writers, why graffiti looks the way it does now and how it developed to this day.

Even though the Stockholm transit police would like to close UP down, they actually aren't our greatest adversaries. That privilege belongs to lack of space in the magazine – there are vast quantities of graffiti to publish and write about – and lack of time – we never have enough time to do the magazine we want.

There are many adventures to experience and many pieces to be inspired by. Most of it is best in real life, not in a magazine. But we still want to show a few examples of what graffiti is. UP was started thirteen years ago to counterbalance the mass media's often ignorant and false depiction of hip-hop in general and graffiti in particular.

Though hip-hop has grown to dominate popular culture, and graffiti is the artistic direction that inspires most young people today, a counterweight to the mass media machine is still needed. Enjoy.

**Malcolm Jacobson**

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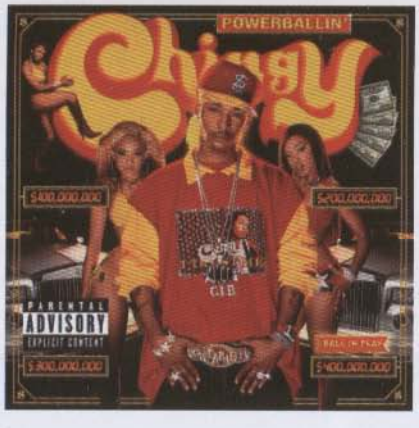


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3. If a piece is a part of a production with several pieces – send in all of them.
4. Don't send the same photos to other magazines.
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6. If your photos don't get published – try again!

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Saes, Mega, Cazter, 1994.

# A wall with history

**Graffiti writers are constantly in search of new walls to work on. However, there are some walls to which writers return year after year, walls that have been used by generations of writers, either because they are highly visible, or because they don't attract any heat. By the Eriksdalsbadet swimming baths in Stockholm is a wall that has been in use for close to the entirety of Swedish graffiti history.**

I usually call it the See Ya Soon wall after one of the first pieces I photographed when I became interested in graffiti in the late 80s.

The piece See Ya Soon was done by **Ways** in 1986. When I photographed it in 1988 it was at the top of the wall, higher than one could reach. The bottom part of the lettering was unfinished, and beneath the piece, the wall was blank. The wall had been much lower when Ways did the piece. He says that back then, the wall was so low you could look over it up to the pedestrian crossing it holds up. A large part of the wall had been covered in earth, but for some reason the ground was levelled in the late 80s. Before Ways did his, there were no pieces on the wall, just tags.

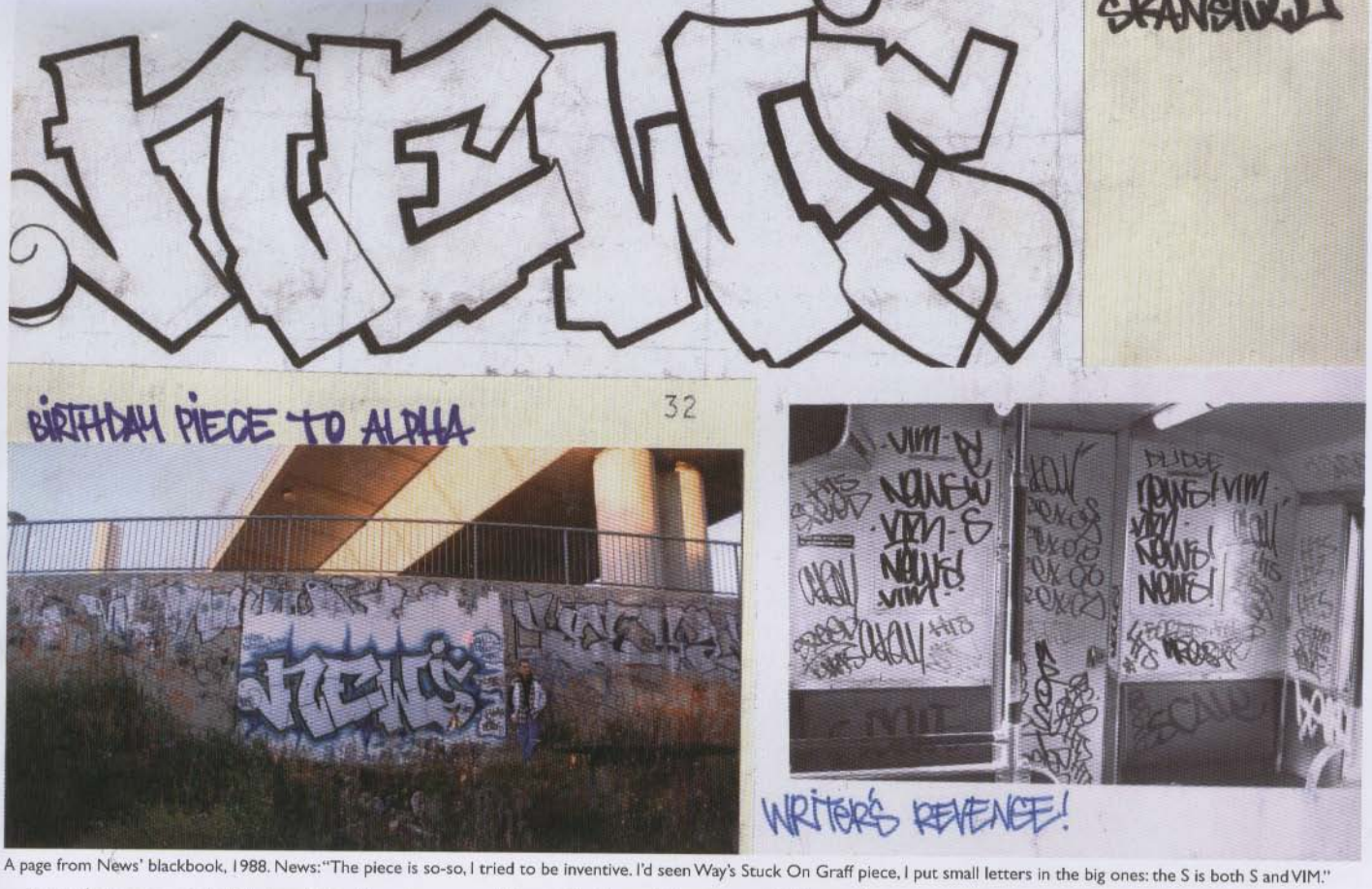
Today the wall is about 10 feet by 200. About 3 feet in front of the wall, the ground inclines towards a disused goods train track. On the other side of the track is Eriksdalsbadet. A few hundred yards away, the subway crosses the Skanstull Bridge.

"The wall is quiet but visible from the subway. That's the way people thought back then: you had to be able to see the pieces from some kind of train," says **News** from the VIM (Vandals In Motion) Crew, who has used the wall many times during the 80s and 90s.

"You have a good view. You could instantly see guards' cars coming by the baths. Sometimes, people with dogs would walk along the pedestrian crossing, but apart from that it was pretty quiet. I like going back to a wall several times. You know what you're going to get. I've never taken big risks. For me, it was an attractive wall, when you saw something new from the subway you went over to check it out."

See Ya Soon by Ways. Painted 1986, photografed 1988.

Vimkings, 1989. Ceios: "We wanted it to be big and in ICB's face."




A page from News' blackbook, 1988. News: "The piece is so-so, I tried to be inventive. I'd seen Way's Stuck On Graff piece, I put small letters in the big ones: the S is both S and VIM."

News has some real oldschool blackbooks, bound with black jackets and white pages, where sketches and photographed pieces are pasted in side by side until the books can hardly be closed.

"It's cool to look in the blackbooks nowadays, since I do so little. Back then, I didn't appreciate the pieces as much as I do today."

News is such a perfectionist that he has numbered all his pieces. Number 32 was done on a rolled underlay on the See Ya Soon wall in the fall of 1988. I mention that it is unusual to roll for a silver piece.

"I was always pretty picky about the underlay. Akay often looked up sites where there was paint and we'd be lugging 12s (12-litre containers of paint) back and forth."

"I've always had a basement to store stuff in," confirms **Akay**.

"Once **Made** and I were at Fridhemsplan, and under the station there's a shooting range for Transit Authority staff. We opened the door – with our own key – and checked around a bit. If there weren't any cops, you'd think it was cool. There were loads of roller paint there, so we got a shopping trolley from a store, filled it with paint and rolled it around on the subway. It must have seemed really lax," says Akay.

**"For me, it was an attractive wall, when you saw something new from the subway you went over to check it out." News**

I note that the piece has a detailed outline, but like many other pieces of the 80s, it lacks 3D and shading. You'd put your energy in outlines.

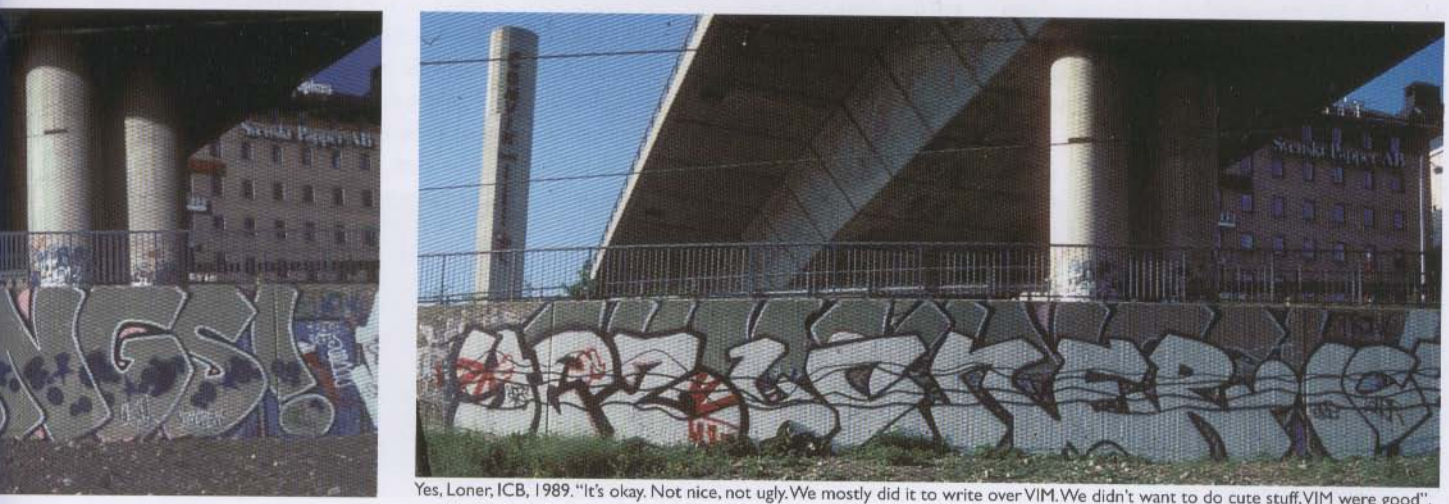
"You'd stand rubbing over and over to get thick, even outlines with a skinny cap," says News.

Vimkings, a piece by **Ceios**, Akay and **Ultra**, was done on the 8th December 1989, during one of the greatest graffiti battles in Stockholm history, VIM versus ICB (Inner City Bombers).

"It was one of the first times we used roller paint for fill-ins. It was simple and cheap. I was surprised how easy it was to do lettering with it," says Akay.

The battle started with Ceios painting over an ICB piece at St. Eriksplan.

"I thought it was old and ugly," he says. "At 8.00 the next morning, Yes called me up to yell at me. He painted over my piece and that started it. Today it's more like, someone draws a line over somebody else's tag, and the other guy tries to find him to hit him. We were two



Yes, Loner, ICB, 1989. "It's okay. Not nice, not ugly. We mostly did it to write over VIM. We didn't want to do cute stuff, VIM were good", says Yes. "I don't think we were the ones who crossed it out; I find it hard to believe that anyone of us would do that," says Ceios.

Blast-Past by Yes, Show, character by Delite, Moral, Atom, 2003.

groups that decided to paint against each other. It was constructive. We both did more pieces than ever before. They were committed, bombing the subway early in the morning, and then going out again later in the day."

"I didn't really care," says News. "It was just an excuse to write a lot." He continues: "In those days, you wanted to do more and more, surpass yourself."

"We weren't enemies. When we met them it was fun to tell them where we'd been writing," says Akay.

**Were you kings?**

"We thought we were better than ICB , they were more a bombing crew," says News.

A smaller, less careful **Yes-Loner**-ICB piece was painted over Vimkings. In turn, it was crossed out with long, black lines.

Fifteen years later, I go and see Yes, who lives in a Stockholm suburb and takes care of his grandmother, who has recently been operated on for a tumor. Yes puts on a CD titled Graffiti Kings. Someone is rapping about bombing and being hardcore. Yes digs it. After ten years out of the game, graffiti is still important to him. He only has a few pictures of the hundreds of pieces he has done. The rest have disappeared over the years.

I show him a picture of the spitted Yes-Loner-ICB piece.

"I was mad at VIM . I couldn't sleep. People thought I was a junkie. I had paint in my faces and all over my clothes. I worked hard to keep ICB on their toes."

"I thought VIM were snobs. Sure, they painted a lot, but I thought I was more hardcore. Akay had done a lot of legal stuff. Are you hardcore or legal, I thought. I was inspired by Skeme in Style Wars. I wanted to erode the system, not do fine art. I was kind of a troublemaker back then and very principled. Not many people started battles. I liked starting them."

**"Not many people started battles. I liked starting them", Yes**

"Battles are good. I don't think there have ever been so many pieces done and so much bombing as there is during battles. We'd go through thirty or forty cans a night. People were inspired. That's missing nowadays. There's no backbone. The others may be bombing all over town. Then you should go and bomb over all their tags."

**That sounds destructive.**

"It's not about destruction. I could do fine art, but I wasn't writing for the public, but for the writers. My understanding was that Akay, Circle and Tariq were artists who used graffiti as an expression. Sure, they were good, but you have to be able to bomb as well. I thought they relied on graffiti too much."

"Through the battle, I got to know Kaos. We almost became best friends and formed the crew TRZ (Transit Rivalz)."

"The battle continued for three of four months. Caster and me bombed the subway by day, stole paint in the afternoon, painted at night and slept in doorways in the mornings. That's how I lived back then. I hung around in town, and couldn't come home at two in the morning, so I said I was staying over with friends. Didn't go to school much."

" My parents were pretty cool, they were more worried about me hurting myself or falling under a train. They approved of bombing. I told them almost all I did – not that

I'd been stealing paint, but I guess they realized that."

**You're becoming a parent soon. Would you accept your child living the way you did then?**

"Sure, anything else would be double standards. But I'd probably worry. Graffiti life made me what I am today. I didn't go to High School, I went bombing. It's the best thing I ever did. I made friends all over town, an incredible network. I have a lot of respect for that period. It's all bullshit that graffiti leads to drugs and crime."

"When I started, I didn't know why I was doing it. You grew into it, the whole idea of having a name, you met people. Then it developed along with me. My idea of graffiti was shaped then."

"I tried doing break-ins, but stopped, and started doing full-time graff. What inspired me most was writing on trains. The last time I did a train, we were doing a double wholetrain in Rissne. There were four of us, we had 320 cans and were doing four cars each. It had never been done before and we'd planned for ages, but we had to rush."

"After the double wholetrain, I couldn't do it any more. It was harder and harder to score cans, and you had to plan like crazy just to do a window-down."

"I got tired of the life, I had no money and lived in an abandoned kindergarten. I guess I

**"You knew the Falcks would wait in prey at newly-buffed walls", Siks**

was exhausted after years of bombing and sleeping in doorways. That was 1993. Since then I've only done small stuff."

But last fall, Yes sneaked out again.

"A lot of the old writers had been going on at me to do it.."

"Moral and Atom were doing the wall at Eriksdal, they'd been there the preceding evening and got quite far. I thought it was a cool idea: oldschool writers doing a burner. It's a classic wall for oldschool writers, it's got history, and that's part of the reason I tagged along."

"It was kind of creepy: there were people walking on the tracks, and guards in the baths. If we hadn't had a lookout I wouldn't have touched the wall. I didn't want to get caught after a ten-year break, I was really nervous. You lose practice when you're not doing it all the time. I want to go out again, but I'll be real careful."

Left: Drie, Drie, Drie, Drie, Joyce, 1991. "I started with one piece, and then it became a concept. I painted over Joyce, I think I asked him if it was okay." says Drie. But Joyce painted over Drie. "I told Drie he couldn't take the whole wall like he owned it," says Joyce. The following day they went out painting together.

Akay has also returned to the See Ya Soon wall after the VIM-ICB battle, even though he doesn't really like it.

"It's not a wall that gets me or that I find attractive. It has mostly to do with how you photograph it – you have to do it from below," he says.

"I like the wall under the St. Erik Bridge, which is quite like it. You can see it from above and take a picture so that it becomes part of the city. That wall looks more natural with pieces on it: it livens up the gray surroundings."

"A wall should be small, so you can cover the whole thing, or large, so you get a concrete background. The Eriksdal wall is graffed to bits. Another thing I don't like about it is that its height is uneven."

When Akay did the Eriksdal wall in 1997, it was fresh after a comeback following a long break from graffiti.

**Were you tired of graffiti?**

"No, I never grew tired of graff, I grew tired of our own development. I took up photography and got other interests."

**What got you to start again?**

"I think I'd been biking around Albano [an industrial district on the outskirts of Stockholm]. They'd just started tearing down a big house with a big, clean wall on it. I immediately saw a piece on it. You see graffiti walls being done all the time, and it had been ages since I'd seen such an inspiring wall. I've been doing things in Albano for a long time, so when I came back and found the house, I felt right at home.

"It was fantastic to go out and paint. It was important that that first piece in so many years was done alone. It's easier to get the atmosphere when you're alone. If I'd been out with Pke, who can't stop talking, I wouldn't have had time to reflect. When you write with someone, graffiti turns into a social thing to a great measure."

After the Albano piece, Akay spent several weeks writing together with Pke. One piece was done on the See Ya Soon wall.

"We tried to do a concept – two styles that fit together. We sketched out what we were going to do together," says Akay.

**Many of the pieces were more Pke then Akay.**

"Oh, yeah, sure, I let him decide. Often it was colors I'd never use myself. Green, blue, violet – I often thought it was all fucked up. But I had no prestige. Ten years earlier I'd fought to do my thing. We both wanted to paint as much, but he had a lot of vision. I thought it would be exciting to see the results of not following your own idea. The stuff we did then feels fun. It doesn't' feel like me."

In the late 90s, there was more graffiti

PkeAky, 1997. "We tried to get rid of all the mess but didn't make it. I can't see myself in this piece," says Akay.

Siks, 1999. "When we finished it, I didn't like it much., the lines should have been broad. Now I think it's great."

cleaning than ever before in Stockholm, and the Transit Authority (SL) employed, plainclothes guards from Falck Security who hunted writers all over town, outside of SL's purview. SIKS found out in the fall of 1999 when they were going to paint on the Eriksdal wall.

Even though writers are unknown to the general public, most writers know who is hiding behind the usual signatures in their home town. It wasn't hard for the Falcks to figure out who was who. That's why a couple of guys started writing Siks together without letting anyone know who they were. The idea was to make people think there was a new kid in town. They managed to keep their identities secret, even to their friends, for a year and a half.

"When SIKS started, we stopped writing our old tags," says one of the members.

"At first we painted so that no-one could recognize our styles. All the pieces were done in the same style. It wasn't very pretty. It was supposed to have a bomb feel."

"It gave us a push to go out. At first we turned the day around, writing five or six days a week. We told our friends we didn't write that much any more, but in reality we'd increased by 200 per cent."

"When we encountered other writers at night we couldn't tell them what we'd done or were going to do. We even got pursued by other writers who were trying to find out who we were."

**What happened at Eriksdal?**

"We'd been out bombing and done a piece. We were going to check if there was any space left on the wall. It had always been a dream wall, because of where it's situated and after having seen Cazter's piece there."

"We got there and found it had just been cleaned – shit."

This meant that there was a great risk of plainclothes guards lurking there.

"There were a lot of plainclothes back then. You knew they'd wait in prey at newly-buffed walls. We should have waited a few days. But

**"A wall should be small, so you can cover the whole thing, or large, so you get a concrete background", Akay**

it was hard to be smart when we were standing there with cans in our hands."

"We checked out the bushes on the other side of the tracks, but we couldn't find anything, so we started painting. When we were almost finished, a watchman's car drove past on the nearby bridge. I think we'd done the fill-in, but we had some trouble with the cans for the outline. We should have had Dinitrol black, but we'd forgotten it, so we had to use Master, that doesn't cover up as well; we had to draw lines twice. We had intended to come back some later day, but finished up anyway."

20 or 30 minutes after starting to paint, they were walking towards the Skanstull subway.

"We were bombing on the way back from the wall. We thought it was safe when we'd walked on for a bit. But suddenly, about five guys in plainclothes came running after us, and a Palooka the size of King Kong caught us both. We tried to get loose, but there were too many of them, and uniformed guards were coming from the other direction. The plainclothes men threw us against a shop window. Then the cops came and made a report."

"The watchman who'd driven by had seen us. He must have got the plainclothes guards over real fast."

**Did they treat you okay?**

"Yeah, and they didn't have a clue who we were. They said they'd been hunting us for weeks, and they'd been close to getting us on two occasions, real close. They were pleased, but of course we weren't. We admitted straight away, so we didn't get a very heavy fine."

"Our piece only remained for a few days being cleaned up. Then **Ehso** said he was going to try the wall. We tried to warn him, but we couldn't reveal we'd got caught over the SIKS piece. He went there with **Alic** and **Lily**, and their pieces stayed up for a year. He's always lucky. We'd been hoping that our piece would stay up there since we were caught, and then his stays there for a year."

**How did other writers find out who you are?**

"I'm almost certain the plainclothes guards told some writer. People started confronting us more often. We denied it, but some of them appeared to know. I was out writing with Ehso, and he found out I was in SIKS while I was sketching up next to him. I thought he already knew."

"Part of the fun went away when people knew who we were, for a short time we almost quit."

**What made you go on?**

"Those of us in the core group are good friends. SIKS is short for Sidekicks; our friendship makes us carry on."

"When people found out who we were, we started developing more personal styles. People who know us immediately see who did what."

**Was it a relief to be unmasked?**

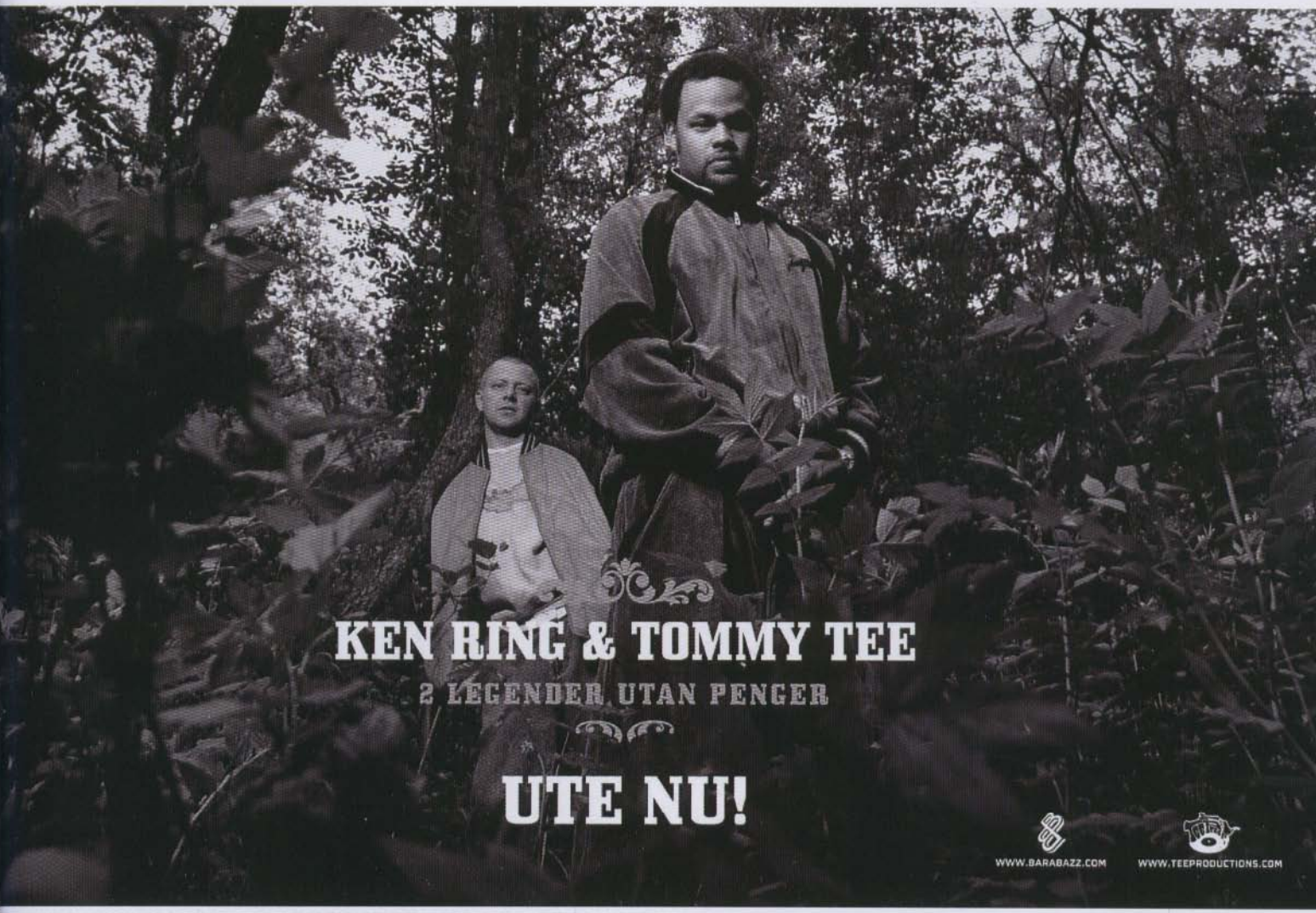
"No, but it was fun to write with several people without doing the old tag I was tired of."

**Malcolm Jacobson**

More photos at www.underground-productions.se. If you have other pictures or stories about this wall or other walls, we'd be happy to accept them by post at UP, Box 773, 12002 Årsta, Sweden. (Please submit photos as photocopies or stored on CD at 300 dpi resolution, in .tif or .jpeg format.)

TWA, 1992. Zero and Joyce had planned to sign themselves The Ants, but Zero quit, and Joyce started TWA (The War Ants) instead, together with Edge, Hoes, Densi and Demens. "I used to paint between 10 and 12 at night there. Sometimes people would look down at you while they were walking their dogs, but back then people didn't have cell phones, so if they wanted to call the cops they had to go home," says Joyce.

Yes, 1991. "God it's ugly. Real ugly, but still cool," says Yes.

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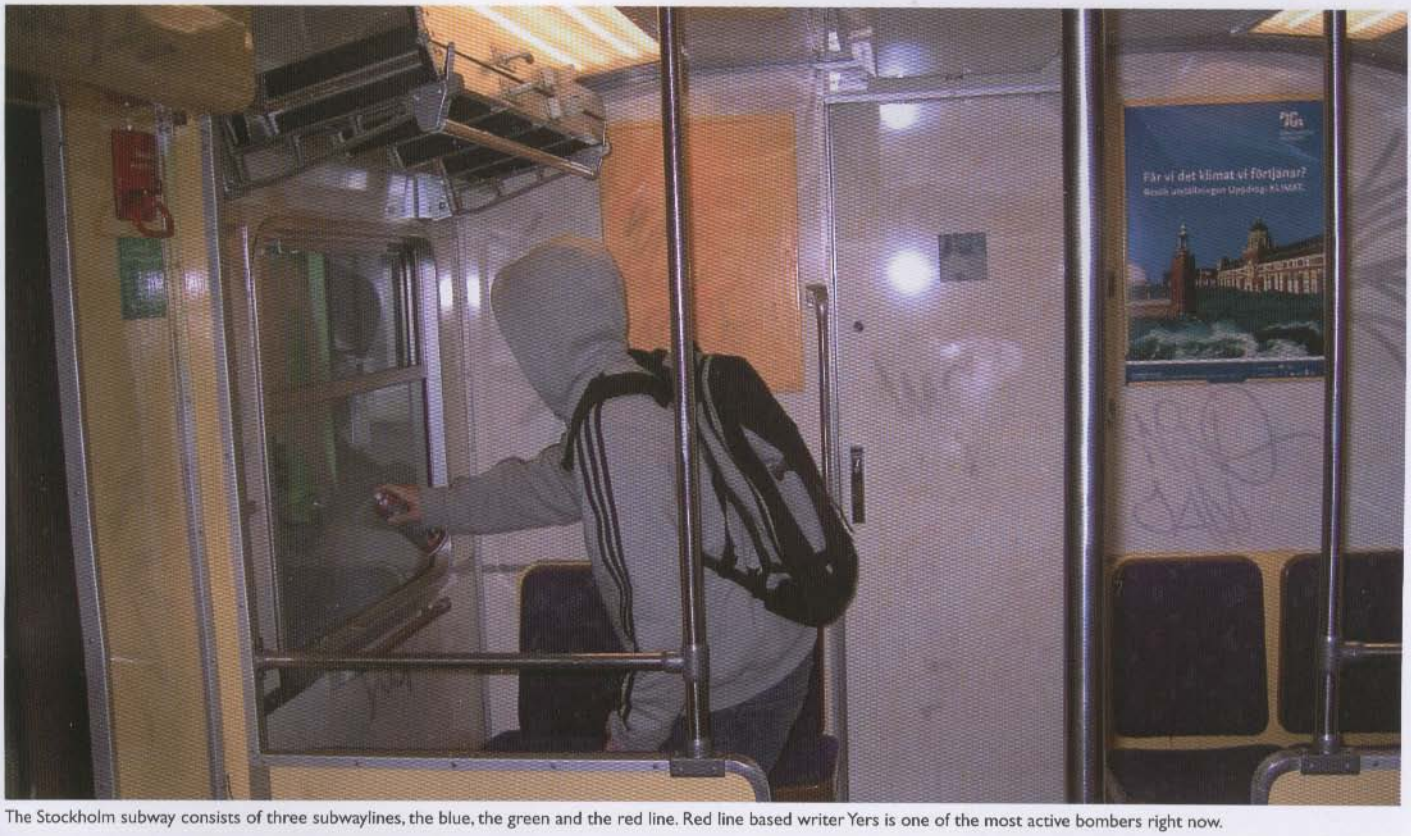



The Stockholm subway consists of three subwaylines, the blue, the green and the red line. Red line based writer Yers is one of the most active bombers right now.

# The life and times of a red line bomber

**There is a bombing tradition without peer on the red line of the Stockholm subway network. Hardcore bombers such as Reson and Arsle are some of the most active writers of the 20th century, and both originate from the red line. The tradition didn't end with them. UP went out on the red line to hook up with one of the most active bombers around: Yers.**

I meet up with Yers at Slussen subway station. We chat for a while, and then take the train towards Fruängen.

Yers seems calm and sensible. He is dressed in a gray hooded jacket and jeans. His jacket is spattered with paint.

Slussen is one of the most central subway stations in Stockholm and is frequently tagged. Yers is among those whose tags appear on floors and walls around the station.

In the summer of 2003, an unusual number of red line trains were adorned with tags. There were so many, one might have thought that the Transit Authority had ceased to remove them.

"Yeah, there was a period when me and **Olik** did a lot of outsides," says Yers.

Since then, Yers has been bombing incessantly. His tags are visible in almost all older subway cars and in the stations along the red line. They also appear in many of the subway stations of central Stockholm.

"I started writing in 2001," he says. "It works for me. I like tags best. Sometimes I might do a panel on the subway as well, usually together with someone else."

We get off the subway at Hägersten, where the tracks emerge from the tunnels and run along tenement buildings and parks. We exit the station and walk alongside the platform. Yers produces a spray can from his satchel, looks up towards the station, and sees that there are two minutes left until the next train.

His cell phone rings. He talks into it, saying he's doing outsides and will call back later.

**Do you often go out on your own?**

"I'm often out with others too, but really I prefer to be on my own. There's always someone who panics and wants to get out because of a bad feeling, or wants to go and have a pizza. I like pizza, but you won't get any tags on the tracks with it."

He sneaks up to the tracks as the train nears the station. He has climbed over the fence before it has stopped. He makes big tags: Yers, Jsa, Jsa, Jsa, Yers, ending with a long line when the train starts moving again.

He jumps back over the fence and breathlessly says that he is exhausted.

"It gets me every time. Once I was out for a

Climbing the fence.

Yers sneaks up to the subway train and writes tags on it.

A few minutes later the train leaves the station.

Opposite side: Yers posing in front of a Hfrpiece on the Stockholm subway

"I like the old (subway) better," says Yers. "It's much more attractive."

whole day with some friends and we tagged about 40 cars. I was planning to go out and drink beer later that evening, but I couldn't do it. I came home and went out like a light."

We leave Hägersten and make our way towards Axelsberg station.

Yers says he got into trouble some time ago. A ticket inspector on the subway became suspicious when she realized that a tag was still wet. She blocked Yers' passage when he tried to get off the train.

"I pushed her aside to get out. She was in plainclothes and hadn't shown any ID."

Several other controllers came running and dragged him out of the subway car onto the platform, where they continued to beat him.

"Nobody said anything. The passenger just stood around keeping quiet. Finally, a young guy came up and asked if they were really allowed to use violence to inspect people's tickets. Then they turned on him, and started to ask him about his ticket and all that."

**Did you fight back?**

"No, I don't fight. I hate violence. I don't get into fights often, either."

Yers says he goes out bombing when he feels frustrated or angry. Graffiti is an outlet for his rage.

"Then alcohol does it. It's only when I'm drunk that I get arrested. Then I can't control my bombing. Otherwise it's cool: I don't take drugs and I'm not into heavy shit."

Yers is due for a court appearance soon.

"I have a few charges that are due up soon. Earlier I was told that if I carry on like this after the age of 18, I might be looking at a jail sentence. Which wasn't nice to hear. But I think it'll be okay. I've been good lately."

We approach Axelsberg. Yers gets ready, produces his spray can, and sits down by some bushes near the fence along the tracks. When the train approaches the station, he climbs over the fence. He makes a few large tags right in front of a young guy who is pressing his face against the pane inside the car.

**"I was out for a whole day and bombed about 40 cars"**

Yers returns over the fence, as exhausted as last time, and we sit on a nearby bench to rest. It is almost 5.30, and the air is getting colder. We sit there for a while and catch our breath. Then Yers wants to go to Norsborg to make some more tags.

During the subway ride, he tells me some stories. He talks about which stations are best for bombing subway cars, or the roofs of cars, or backjumps.

**Do people often get involved when you are out bombing?**

"Sometimes someone gets involved, but if there are several of us, they usually pipe down. Sometimes, gangs that are only out to cause trouble spoil it for us. There was a bunch throwing stones at the subway train at a station by the red line. Finally, they posted guards at the station all summer, and we couldn't do a single outside there.

Yers belongs to the latest generation of red line bombers. In the past ten years, a tradition of bombing has formed, unlike anything on any other Stockholm line. New tags and crews are constantly appearing.

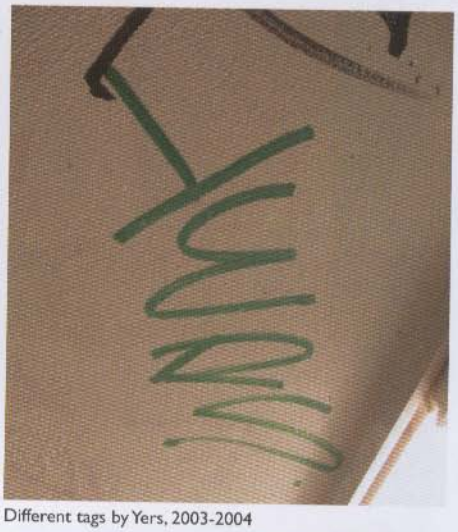
"A lot of people change tags all the time, so you can't keep track of them. I don't have a problem with new writers popping up, but it makes me mad that they have so little respect. If someone does something over one of my tags, I'll go and get one of his, and that's all there is to it."

One of Yers' graffiti partners, Olik has seen many bombers come and go over his years on the red line.

"Olik's the one who gets things going. If we're going to do a wholecar, he's the one who makes the calls and makes sure it gets done and that it's not just all talk. He's been around longer than me, and knows what it was like before. It's fun to hear him when he starts reminiscing."

We get off a stop before Norsborg and waits at the platform for a train going the opposite way. At first a train of a recent model comes in. "Let's skip that one and wait for the next train," says Yers. "I think it's an old model." Indeed, after a few minutes, an older train arrives at the platform.

Yers seeks a car with no other passengers in it and gets out his spray can. During the three minutes it takes to get to the next station, he systematically fills the inside walls with tags. The car reeks of chrome gas and some young guys boarding the train choose the next car when they smell it. Older subway trains usually run on the red line. They are also visible on the blue line, while the green line



Different tags by Yers, 2003-2004

**JSA – Jävla Skit Alltså** (Fuckin'Shit Man)
Members:Wong, Pnk,
Adm, Ior, Yers, Erir
**HFR – Hej Flickor** (Hey Ladies)
Members: Yers, Ior, Erir

almost exclusively has the new model.

"I like the old one better," says Yers. "It's much more attractive. There's a place at Slussen where you can see it coming in against the light, so you only see the shape and hear the squeal. It's really cool. It's got a New York-feel. We leave the subway and walk towards the next station. Yers tells me that there is a small Hall of Fame nearby, but he has never done anything there.

"I've hardly ever painted in fames. It's not really my bag. Sometimes when I've done a good sketch, I want to do a piece, but later, when it doesn't turn out the way I wanted, I get tired of it pretty quickly. Then I go out bombing instead."

Almost three hours have passed since we met at Slussen. It is almost 6.30, and getting dark. Yers' phone rings and he makes arrangements to meet a friend. We take the subway in to town. Along the line I see Yers' tags: Yers, Jsa, Yers, Jsa.

**Torkel Sjöstrand**

Yers belongs to the latest generation of red line bombers.

Yers 2004

When Yers leaves the subwaycar it is filled with tags. All the windows are covered.

**Famous bombers from the Red line:**

Crüel, circa 1987

Soft, circa 1988

Tawe, circa 1989

Arsle, circa 1999

Cyclon, circa 1990

Resone, mid-nineties

Coke, 2004

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UP went there to have a swim in the one of the famous Spas, but stumbeled upon an interesting and living graffitiscene.

# Welcome to paradise

**In Budapest, graffiti is everywhere and the pieces are allowed to remain, on façades, trams and commuter trains**

I arrive in Budapest, the capitol of Hungary, early in the morning. I'm still on the train when they come: the people who sell cheap accommodation to travellers.

Before I know it, I'm sitting on a minibus with four other gullible young men. I notice that the trip to the hostel takes longer than I'd reckoned. It'll be a drag getting back to the station and start looking for alternative accommodation if it turns out my room doesn't match up with the pictures in the catalogue. What the hell, I think, I can take it for one night, and then I can move out if I don't like it.

My fears prove justified: the room is among the lousiest I've seen. The floor is filthy, almost beyond washing, the blinds are broken and the fridge sounds like a highway. The next day I feel rough, but decide that a walk in town is the thing to do.

It transpires that the hostel is not as remote as I first thought. In fact, the most prestigious and renowned medicinal baths, Gellért Spa, are just around the corner. I am on the Buda side, close to the many bridges, castles and other sights that fill the city.

I stay for another night, then I go back to the station to look for the many walls I saw when I first arrived. I fail to find them, but instead discover something far more interesting: row upon row of spray-painted trains.

At first I wander around at random, not knowing whether I should dare to go down on the tracks since I don't want any aggravation with anyone who works there. Then I think that no-one will care about a tourist lugging his camera around. I take several pictures, walking back and forth as new trains arrive. Nobody cares. After a while, I discover rows of trains a bit to one side of the station. I have already experienced the feeling of being removed to the classic graffiti documentary Style Wars, especially in Rome, but it's just as phat every time.

**No fences, no guards. In Sweden this would be unthinkable.**

No fences, no guards. In Sweden this would be unthinkable. Not to mention how long the trains travel with graffiti both inside and on them. In Sweden, no train is in traffic for more than a few hours before the merciless swab has its say. In Budapest, it seems to be a matter of months, even years.

Checking out graffiti is not my primary goal in Budapest, but it's hard to avoid. Apart from commuter trains, graffiti flourishes on house fronts and trams. Moreover, there are several rooftops and Halls of Fame.

Welcome 2 paradise!

One day on Nyugati, I encounter several local writers. I ask them if the trains by the station are trash trains. They tell me that these trains are still in traffic but that they are only left next to the station by day.

At night, they get their beauty sleep in the countryside. They also tell me that there have been concerted efforts when a few hundred trains have been cleaned in one fell swoop, but then the money has run out and order has prevailed.

Perhaps it's just a matter of the train company not being able to afford to remove graffiti. At the same time, I can't help suspecting that one of the reasons for graffiti being left alone is that the general culture and worldview of the former Eastern loc states are different from those back home in Scandinavia.

**Kristoffer Ekman**

A Hall of Fame along the tracks.

Bs3,Bs3

Bs3

Corupt

Mokie

Fuck Cops

Hoek

Stick

Syctem, TopDog

An unusual sight in Budapest in July: Graffiti cleaners in full regalia one rainy day.

Kscrew

Base

Kems

Heric

Aned, Dems

Hoek

Along the tracks.

Emer, Stick and friends.

Tagging in Budapest.

Stick

Stick One representin' Budaside

Vas: My name, my style, my game... My life!

Emer

Bs3

Mide

# New techniques on the streets of Stockholm

**Text and photos: Kristoffer Ekman**

**Sometimes new trends flare up. Someone starts writing in white shoe polish on subway windows and suddenly everyone's there doing it. Someone starts writing high up on a rooftop, and it's the same old thing again.**
**A trend has begun.**

Old writers are used to the fact that a stroll through town tends to take longer than initially planned. You've got to check out the new styles, peoples, brand names, tags. Tags in particular have a tendency to appear all over the place, so it pays to keep an eye out for the unknown.

Lately, we've noticed tags right in front of our feet as we go to get ourselves a cup of coffee in town. There are so many that it's starting to look like a trend. Previously, in the subway, tags appeared on the ground and on the ceiling, where no buffing took place for quite some time. The same thing is now happening in the stations. The cleaning company does what it is paid to do, and leaves the rest to someone else – though it is unclear who.

Life is Good to Me!
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EDDIE
DEPENDING ON YOUR OWN
BACTERIA:
URBAN
SECTION
INFECTION.
FÖRLÅT
FÖRLÅT
Poeja!
Stay in bleeding

# STOCKHOLM WALLS

Beor, Seom, Jues – Subwaystation Hötorget

Phik

Jons

Qs, Iq – Subwaystation St: Eriksplan

PmsArmy, the huge silverpiece covered the entire side of subwaystation Universitetet, 2004

Nove

Kah

Boyo, Mario

Stik, Biss

Hitme, Polar, Jeks, Desk 7, ZZTop

F-ups

# STOCKHOLM TRAINS

Pms, Fk – Subway

Marr, Stick – Commuter train

Cae, Nug, Whel, Reil, Blo – Commuter train

Uze, Nick – Subway

Bomb – Commuter train

Fame – Subway

Caey, Carl, Ape, Roxy – Subway

Ado, Tier, Pubee – Subway

Fame – Subway

Vims – Subway

Glöm – Commuter train

Whel – Subway

Hej, Y3k – Commuter train

Jues – Commuter train

Uze, Tier – Subway

Nug – Commuter train

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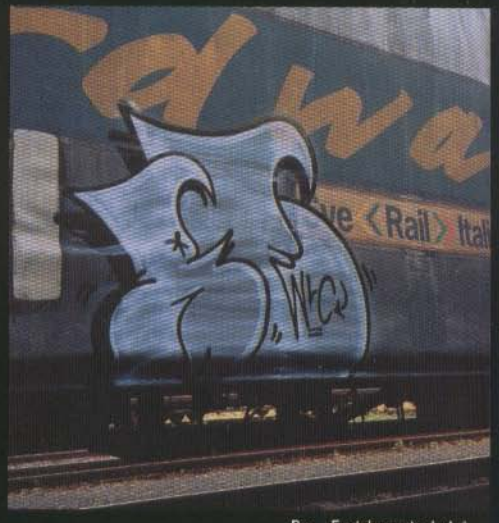
Night ime in Luleå. In the summer this is how dark it gets in the nortern part of Sweden



Re – Freight train, Luleå

Ifs – Itino train

# SWEDISH TRAINS & WALLS

Rec, Slak – Luleå

Hitit – Norrköping

Eros..

..Bred – Intercity train, Borås

Ner – Scania commuter train

De Proffesionella Konstgangstrarna & Tele – Gothenburg

Death, Death – Malmö

Rick, Casan – Uppsala

Otur – Freight train, Luleå

Cler – Regina, Scania

Ner – Scania commuter train

Bingos, Fire, Relik, Tomato, Poet – Gothenburg

Ment

Penso, Ares

Punk

# GOTHENBURG

Igss

F-Up

Igs

Moreone

Mabe, Skar

Pe

Fire

Penso, Ma, Tais

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Jeep, Keep, Deep – Helsinki

Nikki, Yolk, Savvy – Helsinki

# FINLAND

Donut – Vaasa

Sups – Vaasa

Mar – Vaasa

Cesar, HuskMitNavn, Best – Helsinki

Handjob 74, Fupla, Zigut, Kis – Helsinki

Beer, Boobs, Booty – Helsinki

Musi, Mom, Äiskä – Helsinki

Donut, Marek – Vaasa

Mar, Don – Vaasa

Donut, Tyran – Vaasa

Mar, Don – Vaasa

Skin, Best, Kays, Risk – Helsinki

Seksie, Go, Fins, Ians

# Anniversary with 10,000 square feet of pieces

On September 4th, Unfinished Business was organized at Norrköping's coal port, Sweden's largest Hall of Fame and legal graffiti reservation. The theme was Twenty Years of Swedish Graffiti, and some 10,000 square feet of walls had been painted white for the occasion. Most of the walls were reserved for invited guests, but space was also given to casual visitors. Several walls received several layers of paint over the course of the day. According to the arranger, Europaväg 4, some 250 people were painting, and 500 came to watch.

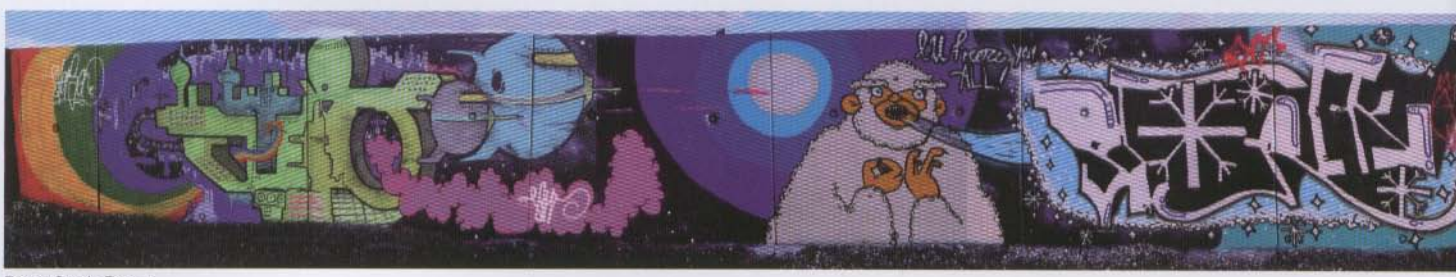
A comeback was made by the actor **Liam Norberg**, one of Swedish graffiti's pioneers using the tag **Merley**. He was surrounded by the 30-year-olds who were toys when he was active in the early 80s.

**Seksie**, **Killah, Finsta** and **Ians**' black-and-white burner probably came in for the greatest degree of appreciation.

"When me and Seksie were doing our productions in the late 90s, we'd talked about doing a black-and white wall with a gangster theme, featuring Mafiosi from old movies, says Killah.

"Finsta said we should do a Disney theme instead. He has a lot of old Disney movies at home. That was good: anyone can do Disney characters; otherwise Finsta would have had to do all the characters himself. It was a bit messy at first, everything was a gray blur. But after a while, you got black-and-white vision. We had loose frames from the movies, and jammed everything together on the wall. I did my Go sketch in the car, five minutes before drawing it up on the wall."

**Malcolm Jacobson**



Disco, Sarek, Dance..

..Adoo, Arom

Pasha, Puppet

Venueone, Bams, Samot

Kaos

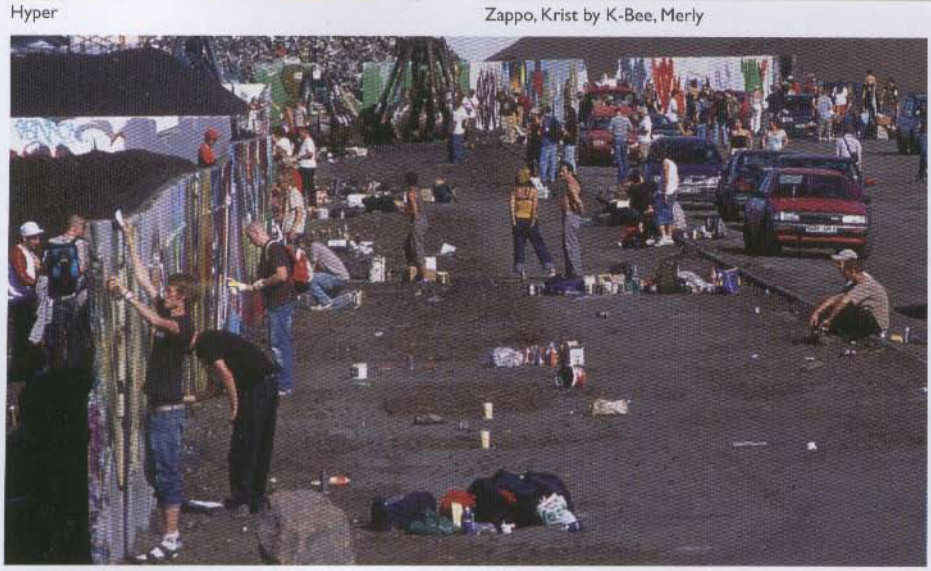
Jons

Mer

Uzer, Bill, Rboy, Que

Hyper

Zappo, Krist by K-Bee, Merly

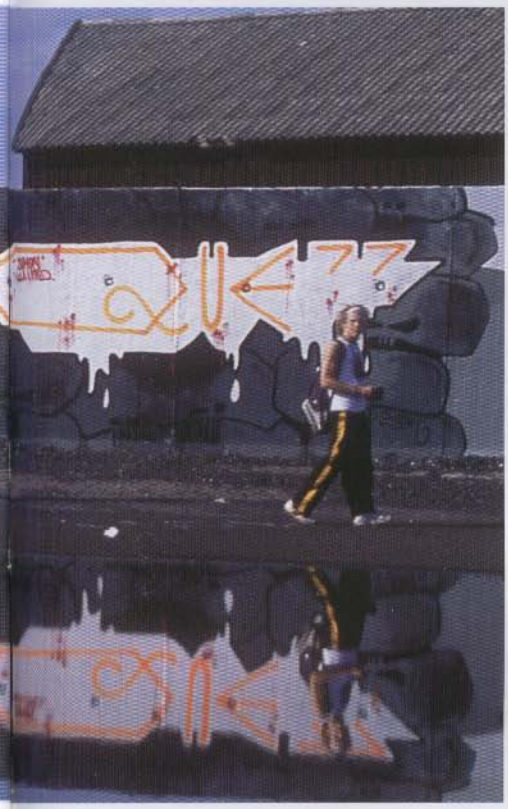


About 800 people showed up for the 20 year anniversary for Swedish graffiti

Jeks, Dirte, Brucer

Just, Balans, Track

Disey, Pke, Core, Midas, Nug



Rutin, Dne

Acte, Gas

7upe, Sheba

ALLTID
I MITT
HUVUD

Etc – Stockholm, 2004

# "There are always a few lines in my head"

**You often hear the complaint that "the new generation of writers" can't draw. Is style important to them? UP spoke to King Kong, who has a remarkably confident style despite his youth.**

If there is a correlation between a writer and his tag, King Kong has chosen one that is his polar opposite. King Kong is a gangly figure, as far removed from a raging monster as you can get. Because that's my image of the big ape from the movie. Just as most people think of graffiti writers as dangerous criminals. But King Kong, the ape, was actually a gentle creature, just as most graffiti writers are not dangerous.

At first King Kong, the writer, seems shy, but appearances can be deceiving. It is more a matter of thoughtfulness on his part. He often stops to think of the right word. Sometimes his face spreads into a generous smile.

There is no trace of arrogance, but of consciousness of what he is doing.

King Kong is 17 and did his first piece in 2001. "Lousy," he says of it. He has practised drawing since he was small, drawing comics and painting in acrylics. It was a small step to drawing letters.

Then it wasn't long before he got caught.

"After that I sat at home and sketched a lot. I'd spend ages working on the sketches. Now I think sketching that way takes far too much time. I was never satisfied when I was going to make a piece out of my detailed sketches either. My expectations were too high. If I have an idea, I want to put it together quickly and do it on a wall. There are always a few lines in my head that I base a piece on. It's easier to gain satisfaction without sketches and expectations. It's nice to do something and not care that much. Then later, when you look at it, it can start to feels good."

Many writers have a romantic view of the good old days. Among older writers, this can take the form of a yearning; among the younger ones, this yearning is also mixed with pride at furthering graffiti despite increasingly hard times.

"If you read interviews or hear about the 80s and 90s, all the 16-year-olds seemed to have written loads," says King Kong. "And when you look at those pieces now, they're really cool. I think a lot of what 16-year-olds are doing nowadays is crap."

But back then, the age difference between veterans and toys was only a few years. Now 20 years can separate them.

**Isn't it harder to catch up with your style now?**

"I don't think many people care about that, they're not that interested in getting good. Not that many people think 'Shit, I'm going to be this good', but more: 'Shit I'm going to be this fameous'. Of course, what's good-looking is a matter of taste, too. I think a lot of it depends on why you start doing graffiti. I started when I saw it on the streets and thought how cool it was. But I think people who first see graffiti on the internet get a different picture. Most of

KingK, Subwaystation Hötorget – Stockholm 2004

Opposite page: Kelly by Kingkong – Stockholm, 2004

Kingkong- Stockholm, 2003

those who start aren't that interested in drawing, they just want to get their name up there. Some start by doing trains. Then it's all: 'Whoa, check this out!'"

Since the mid-1990s, the Stockholm graffiti scene has been marred by the zero tolerance policies adopted by the authorities. The pressure has only diminished somewhat in the last two years.

**Could zero tolerance be the cause of style losing importance?**

"Yes, I think so. I guess it was quieter before. Then you could stand around doing burners. Now people immediately start in a stressed-out atmosphere. If you're used to writing fast all the time, when you're in a quieter place, you forget that you've got time to spend."

I can't help asking King Kong where he got his name, since he is so far removed from it.

"King Kong ... I don't know. I started writing it a year ago. During class I'd always write King Kong on some paper. I like Ks and Gs and long names. When you say a tag, it's important that it should sound good. Some tags have nice shapes, but no sound. King Kong has perfect shapes and perfect sound. When I started writing King Kong, I started to develop. It's important to find the right tag. King Kong fits like a glove."

**"I don't think many people care about style, they're not that interested in getting good."**

**You're in a crew called GAY. Does this have anything to do with your sexual orientation?**

"No. It's really an acronym for Guys and Yards, but we mainly adopted the name to provoke. Some people have seriously asked us if we're gay."

KKong, Hofe, Goth – Stockholm, 2004

I ask King Kong which way his style is headed now. He laughs.

"No idea. I feel like it's getting away from me. I think you first have to feel confident with your style and then experiment with it. I know my style by heart. A year ago I was changing styles all the time. That's why my tag changed so often. It's like when kids seek their identity. Once you've found it, you start to develop it. There are quite a few details in my pieces, but they are becoming simpler and purer."

King Kong also looks for something else in his work: mystique.

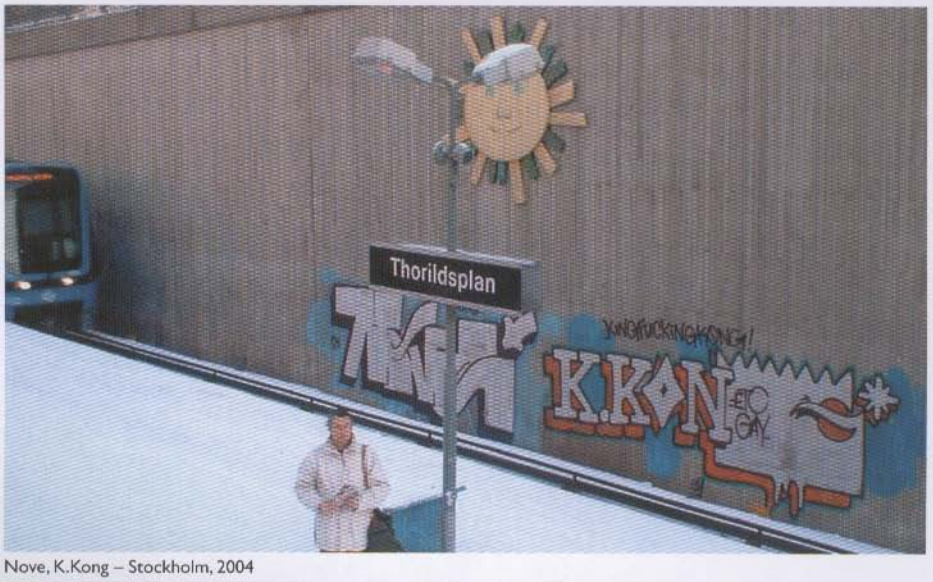
"I like my graff to be mysterious. I don't know if I'm successful, but I try," says King Kong and smiles. "One writer who has pulled off mystique is **Silk**. His pieces are never exact, they're quick, and the lines go all over the place. I like it when it doesn't have to be precise. It's a sign of freedom."

"It's important that graffiti should be different," says King Kong. "There should be something new in a piece. Mystique isn't only about how the piece looks, but also about where it's placed.

"Chrome and black, empty concrete walls, worn surroundings: that's cool. I like to walk around and just bump into a piece. It makes me really happy when a panel rolls along on the train since it's unusual, but it makes me even happier to find a cool piece in a completely unexpected environment. The unexpected is phat."

Location has a great deal of influence on King Kong's pieces. He tries to adapt to the wall. Writing without a sketch is all about

QingK, 2004, King, 2004, KingK, 2004 – Stockholm




Nove, K.Kong – Stockholm, 2004

Pyter, Kingkong – Malmö, 2004

adapting to circumstances. The piece is shaped by everything that happens to him while he works. However, other influences occur in the environment.

**Is there any correspondence between pictorial art and, say, music?**

"I certainly think so. If I hear a shady tune, I want to do a shady piece. I try to convey a feeling to my pieces.

**How do you do that?**

"No idea. It doesn't have to be music, it may be movies or things you see. Emotions affect me, it's really hard to explain. I get a lot of images in my head, pictures and shapes."

**Who do you want to reach?**

"Just ordinary folks, mostly. I don't want them to understand. I want them to wonder. I want to give a strong impression and convey a feeling. It doesn't have to be a specific feeling, but it's good if it's a bad one. Then they get angry, and that's fun," laughs King Kong.

King Kong's work undeniably comprises elements to appeal to an audience that is unused to graffiti esthetics. Like Kropp, another Stockholm writer, King Kong often uses elements other than letters.

"When I started writing King Kong, I sometimes thought it was too much like Kropp."

"There's a lot of talk about style generally," says King Kong.

**Do you think there is a Swedish style, or even a Stockholm style?**

"You can see a difference between writers from Stockholm, Malmö and Gothenburg. In Gothenburg, writers are more playful, they still have a child's sensitivity in their work. It's hard to say what the Stockholm style is. You see it all day long. There is a style here. It's probably pretty quick. There's quick graffiti in other cities too, but here it's quick and stressed out, not quick and heartfelt. It doesn't want to be quick, but it has to be because there are guards all over the place."

**"Chrome and black, empty concrete walls, worn surroundings: that's cool."**

**So why expose yourself to the risks and simultaneously have to do graffiti that's too hurried?**

"Tough question," says King Kong. "It's just the way it is. It's crazy fun, and it's such a good feeling to write. It's quite cozy, really. Especially the preparation, packing your caps and paint. Sketching the piece up on the wall is the best part, because that determines what it will look like. And a lot of stuff happens around you. You see weird people when you're out at night."

King Kong emphasizes that the feeling of everything that happens around the piece, that which influences the result, is important. Though King Kong doesn't think he is particularly active – as he puts it – he has been caught a few times.

"You get mad if they catch you, especially if they confiscate all your cans. But the urge always comes back after a week. In a way it only makes you stronger. It eggs you on. 'Now I'll go out and bomb!' you think."

SL, The Stockholm Transit Authority, have spearheaded a long battle against graffiti. The hostilities are mutual.

"I guess I hate SL in a way. Connex stewards always mess with you. But if I write in a station, it's not to fuck up the system."

Kingkong, Kingkong, Kingkong – Stockholm, 2003

King, Judies – Stockholm, 2004

**What would get you to quit?**

"If I stopped writing, I'd get weepy, angry and sad," says King Kong laughing. "I'll always paint somehow, but maybe not always on a wall. That's how I feel now. But my work is spontaneous. Everything is spontaneous. You never know what can happen at night."

**Tobias Barenthin Lindblad**

Kingkong – Stockholm, 2004

Kingkong, Pyton – 2004

Pyton, Kingkong – Stockholm, 2004

Judie, Gay – Stockholm, 2003

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Nuek – Reginatrain

# Painted horses and comical lettering

**Dalecarlia lies northwest of Stockholm, and is Sweden's eighth largest region, counting some 280,000 inhabitants. It is divided into several small towns, like Borlänge, Mora and Falun.**

Dalecarlia is where the traditional Swedish carved and painted wooden horse hails from. It is also the origin of CP crew. Their naïve graffiti has made them renowned far beyond Dalecarlia's borders. But is all Dalecarlian graffiti naïve?

To refresh our knowledge of the region's graffiti, we threw some questions out into cyberspace. After a short wait, we got got in touch with **Claon**, who was an active writer in Dalecarlia in the 80s and 90s, and **Bill**, **Hopp** and **Nuek**, who are active today.

**How old is the graffiti scene in Dalecarlia?**

**Claon**: The first pieces appeared in Falun around 1986, about the same time as the Danish chewing gum cards (see UP 27). There were two or three people doing it back then.

**Is it a big scene?**

**Nuek**: There are more people doing walls than trains. It's hard to estimate how big the scene is. Most of the walls along the train tracks are painted. There's hardly any buffing along the tracks here.Train writers are the most established. Newbies aren't usually accepted.

**What's the atmosphere like in the scene?**

**Hopp**: There's a pretty good sense of togetherness. Dalecarlia is pretty small, and most of us know each other. Of course, the restricted amount of yards and lay-ups causes certain problems.

**Is there a special Dalecarlian style?**

**Nuek**: There's no special style, except that most of us like comical lettering.

**How does the future look for Dalecarlian graffiti?**

**Bill**: More trains are being done now. The climate's getting harder, new generations of writers with new values are appearing.

**Torkel Sjöstrand**

"Real Shit comes from Dalecarlia", Bill.

Bill – Regina train

Smell – Regina train

Sar...

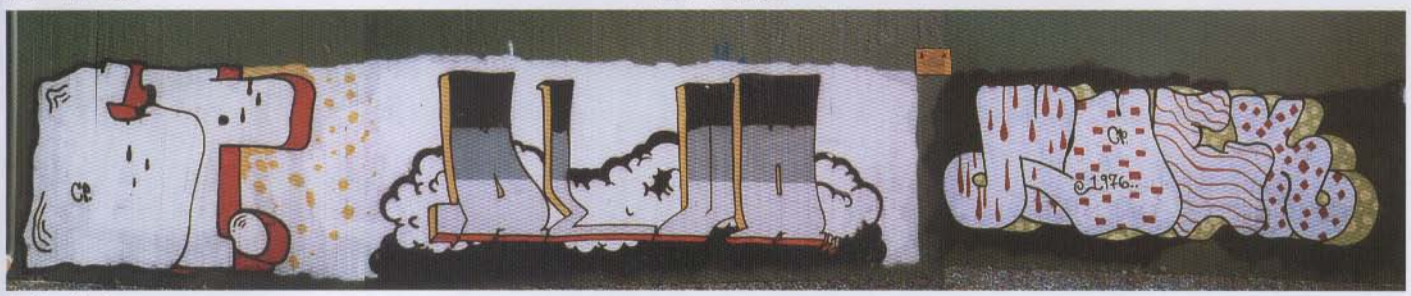
Character by Maes, El Rey

...Aen...

Hopp, K-Yo

...Dir – Interregio

Hej – Interregio



Cp, Alva, Nuek

Jao, Cle, Bro, Hopp – Interregio

Exil, Begs, Kils

Hej – Interregio

Nuek – Reginatrain

Vem – Interregio

Hej – Reginatrain

Alva – Intercitytrain

K-Yo, Hopp

Tolv

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